

DEER PARK BROADCASTER

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LPPD hosts Memorial Day DWI enforcement efforts



LPPD Chief Ken Adcox announces new DWI processing procedures

On the afternoon of May 22nd, a press conference was held at the La Porte Police facility to outline a series of coordinated Memorial Day DWI enforcement activities, as well as highlight a new set of Emergency Medical Service (EMS) procedures regarding the mandatory blood draw for such drivers. The event was attended by several law enforcement agencies, as well as members of the Harris County District Attorney's Office, the Bay Area Council on Alcohol & Drugs (BACODA), Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT), and La Porte's own EMS personnel.

Additional Law Enforcement personnel from Deer Park, Houston, Harris County Sheriff's Office, Harris County Precinct #1, and the Texas Department of Public Safety will join LPPD in hitting the streets this Memorial Day weekend, specifically targeting potential drunk drivers. The additional officers are being made possible by way of grant-funded over-time provided by TXDOT. LPPD already has a comprehensive TXDOT STEP grant and is also part of a cooperative Multi Agency, Multi County TXDOT DWI Grant, which is managed by the Houston Galveston Area Council (HGAC). Such programs are particularly important for this area of the State, as Harris County is the drunk-driving capital of the nation based on the number of alcohol related fatalities. In fact, during 2012 Harris County had 175 fatalities involving drivers with a BAC of .08 or higher.

Added to the local enforcement efforts, LPPD is leading the area in taking advantage of new laws enabling EMS personnel to conduct blood draws, following warrants issued against suspected drunk drivers. A 2013 order originated within the 83rd legislative session, where legislators changed the statute omitting EMT personnel as qualified technicians for the taking of a specimen. The statute was amended to allow EMT (paramedics) to draw blood under specific conditions. La Porte PD and La Porte EMS have since taken the steps necessary to allow for qualified EMS personnel to draw blood.

The most significant benefit in the passage of such a law concerns the element of time. Officers no longer have to take a prisoner to a Hospital facility; taking up to 30 minutes just to transport a suspected impaired driver. Under these former conditions, an officer would have to wait for a phlebotomist to take the specimen then transport the suspect back to jail, thus adding at least an hour to the DWI process. The added time to transport a prisoner and wait for the drawing of blood allows for the alcohol to dissipate; consequently lowering the suspect's Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC). This

process also removes a prisoner from a secured jail to an unsecured hospital emergency room.

However, with EMS personnel now authorized to take the specimen, an officer can very easily have a specimen taken within twenty minutes of gaining consent from the arrested person, or by obtaining a warrant.

La Porte Officers, and area law enforcement participating in the Memorial Day initiative, now have every available resource to apprehend and prosecute DWI offenders. Once arrested, officers will transport suspects to the jail and request a specimen. If the suspect refuses to provide a specimen voluntarily, the officer will then draft a warrant, and present the facts to a Municipal court judge, who will review and sign the warrant should probable cause exist. Upon judicial approval, EMS personnel will then take the specimen, all without interrupting their normal care duties for the community. Key among the listed benefits, officers will be able to return to the streets in a shorter amount of time.

For more information on any of LPPD's DWI enforcement efforts, contact the agency Traffic Division at 281-842-3167.